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UNCLAS HELSINKI 001170

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SUBJECT: FINNISH VIEWS IN ADVANCE OF NOVEMBER GAERC

REF: STATE 198361

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¶1. (SBU) PolChief delivered reftel demarche to EU Correspondent Jarno Syrjala, who highlighted the Balkans, ICTY cooperation, Syria, Iran and the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) among Finnish priorities for the November GAERC.

¶2. (SBU) BALKANS: Syrjala anticipated (correctly) that former Martti Ahtisaari would receive UNSYG Annan's nomination to become UN Special Representative for Kosovo, and would address the ministers in that capacity during the GAERC's lunch meeting. Further discussion of Kosovo is likely, he added, especially as regards options for supporting the special envoy. (Given that Ahtisaari is a former Finnish President, providing strong EU support is important for Helsinki.) Syrjala opined that one method the ministers will consider for securing adequate EU support both to Ahtisaari and to the status determination process would be the establishment of an EU Special Representative. On Macedonia, Syrjala said the GOF agreed with reftel's points. On Bosnia-Hertzegovina, he suggested the EU may begin considering how best to widen its participation in initiatives associated with the stabilization and association agreement. Progress in this area had been delayed due to problems in the police reform sector, but these have now been remedied and the ministers may be considering ways forward, Syrjala said.

¶3. (SBU) ICTY COOPERATION: Syrjala expressed the GOF's lingering disappointment over the fact that, in October, Austria succeeded in "linking" the opening of EU membership talks with Turkey to the start of talks with Croatia. At the time, he said, some member states who, like Finland, opposed the "linking" tried to convince themselves that Carla del Ponte's statements regarding Croatia's "full compliance" with the ICTY might mean that "Gotovina would appear in the Hague in a week or two." However, Finland was never this optimistic, he lamented, and with each passing week that rosy interpretation appears more hollow. The GOF still expects to see Gotovina and others before the ICTY, and takes some small consolation in the fact that Croatia's membership process "can always slow" if they remain at large.

¶4. (SBU) Regarding the Middle East, Syrjala offered only a few comments. He said the GOF will support the EU's making a strong statement insisting on Syria's cooperation with the Hariri murder investigation and its full compliance with UNSCR 1559. However, regarding our talking point urging strict non-engagement with Syria, Syrjala noted that "isolation has its down sides," and may not win EU consensus as a shared course of action. Regarding the MEPP, Syrjala noted that while the Israeli government has made no concrete decisions yet regarding Third Party Cooperation, the idea might offer the EU a useful role to play in providing training and possibly equipment. On Iran, he suggested that the EU needed to come up with strong positions from which to re-launch dialogues with Tehran on human rights and the nuclear issue. The latter is particularly pressing, given that the next round of IAEA discussions with Iran is scheduled for November, he said.

WERDERMAN